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HEBREW
SEALS

ANCIENT HEBREW SEALS

BY A. REIFENBERG



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to

L. A. M.

F O R E W O R D

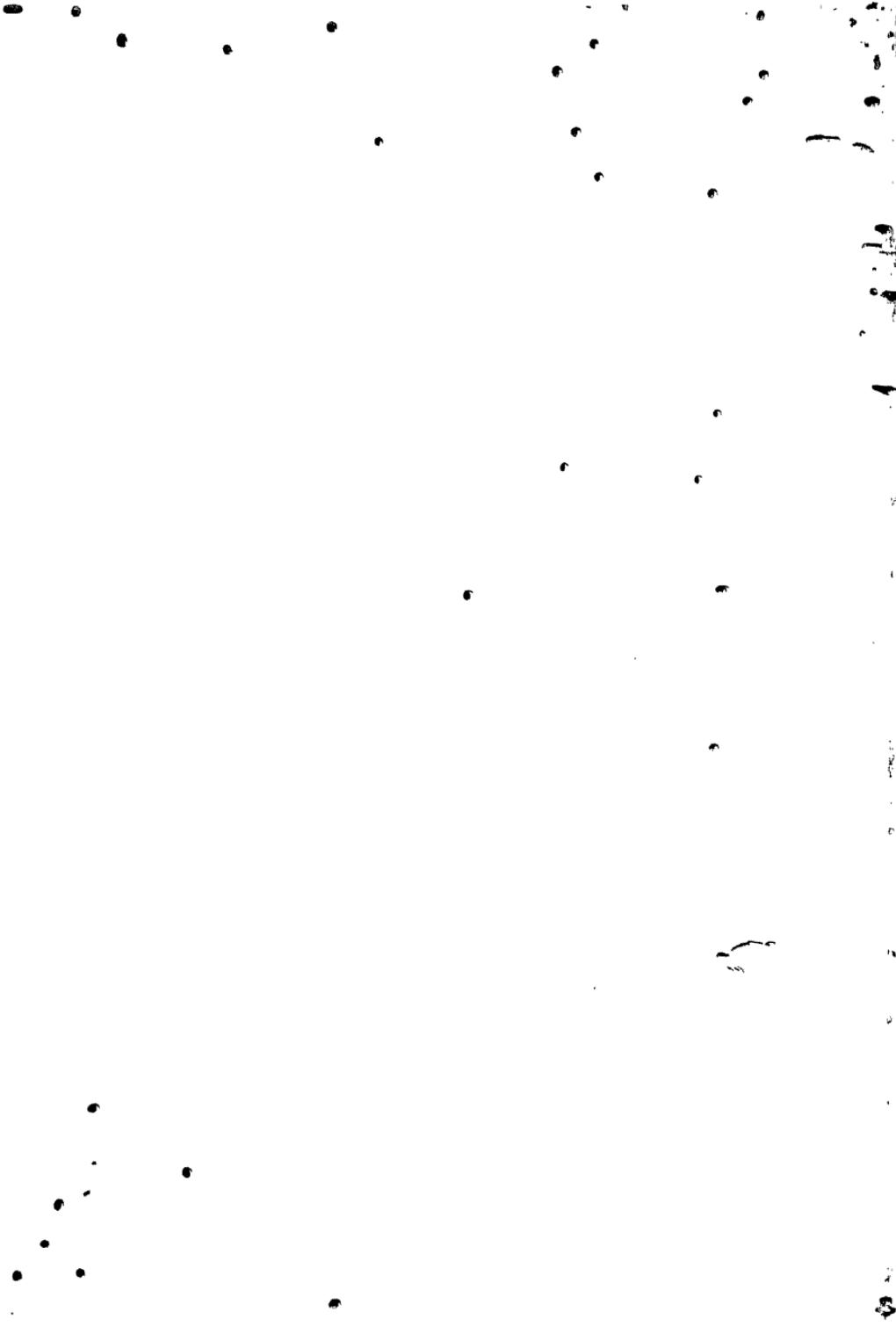
The present monograph deals with inscribed seals dating from the period of the Hebrew monarchy. Not only seals from Palestine, but also those from neighbouring countries have been included, in order to show their common cultural background. For the same reason illustrations of contemporary ivories etc. have been given.

These monuments, small as they are, throw a new light on Biblical archaeology and religious thought. Most of these seals were hitherto known to a few specialists only and many had been badly reproduced. Some of them are published here for the first time. For all these reasons it is hoped that this booklet will serve a useful purpose.

The inscriptions found on the seals are proof of the growing religious consciousness of the Jewish people and their representations serve to illustrate the art of the Solomonic temple. The influence which this Hebrew-Phoenician art had on Greece and the West is also treated in this monograph.

Jerusalem, April 1948

A. REIFENBERG



ORIGIN, USE AND PURPOSE OF SEALS

IN ANCIENT TIMES, seals were used for documentation and as marks of ownership in exactly the same way as they are being used today. The affixing of a seal to a document serves the purpose of excluding any doubt as to the identity of the contracting party. The origin of seals is to be sought in Mesopotamia, where about ten thousand seal cylinders dating from the fourth millennium to the Persian period (4th cent. B.C.) have been found. Herodotus still mentions the fact that in Babylonia everybody was wearing a seal. Babylonian and Assyrian documents were mainly written on clay tablets and for these the roll cylinder was an inconvenient though possible form. Gems found in the Greek islands had a glandular or lenticular form and were mostly used not for sealing but for ornamental purposes in Minoan and Mycenaean times. The Egyptians again used quite another form, the so-called scarab, and from the 8th century B.C. we find this particular shape even in the countries of the Western Mediterranean. The scarab is a reproduction of the sun-beetle (*ateuchus sacer*) and was, at least originally, not a seal but an amulet. The sacred beetle was the type and emblem of the sun-god.

The Hebrew-Phoenician seal, with which this monograph is concerned, makes its first appearance in the 9th or 8th century B.C. It has the special feature of containing the owner's name, a practice found only very rarely on Babylonian or Egyptian seals. Uninscribed seals of course also existed alongside of inscribed. Here the seal mainly served the purpose of sealing letters and documents written on papyrus, and for this purpose a cylindrical shape was quite unsuitable.

Some Hebrew seals, under Egyptian influence, were in the form of a scarab (fig. 50, 1), but the great majority were scaraboids, i.e. the back of the seal did not have the size of a beetle but was only slightly vaulted (fig. 50, 2). Probably under Assyrian influence some seals were in conoid form (fig. 50, 3).

Most Hebrew seals were pierced longitudinally and worn on a string (Gen. 38: 18; Jer. 22: 24; Cant. 8: 6); others were set into rings (fig. 51) which were likewise worn on a cord. The fact that these seals were used to seal documents (Jer. 32: 10, 14; Jes. 8: 16, 29: 11) and letters (1 Kg. 21: 8) is well attested in the Bible. The sealing material was finely graded clay (Hi. 38: 14) and several such seal-impressions have been found (fig. 25, 26). In some cases papyrus fibres are still recognizable on the back of these impressions. Very often seals were also used for stamping jar handles.

MATERIAL AND TECHNIQUE

While most scarabs imported into Palestine, or imitated there, were made of soft material such as steatite fayence or frit, the Hebrew seals were generally made of semi-precious, hard stones. Cornaline imported from Arabia or Egypt was the favourite stone, but often we also find chalcedony, jasper and agate. Other materials used, apart from limestone, were rock crystal, haematite, onyx, amethyst, lapis lazuli, opal, and in isolated cases ivory, serpentine, jade, amazonite, steatite and tin. It is significant that, in contrast to the glyptic art of other countries, hard limestones were frequently used. Limestone is abundant in the country, and in one case it was possible to trace the exact provenance of the material employed (bituminous limestone from the Jericho region). The use of such a comparatively cheap material as limestone suggests that seals were not con-

fined to the well-to-do in ancient Israel, but were widely used among the common people. This can be deduced also from the fact that comparatively many more name-inscribed seals were found in Palestine than in other Semitic countries such as Phoenicia, Moab, etc. About half the number of all 'Hebrew-Phoenician' seals have been found in Palestine.

The Hebrews received their semi-precious stones probably through Phoenician traders; the Bible mentions expressly that the navy of Hiram brought precious stones from Ophir (Arabia) to Palestine (1 Kg. 10: 11) and Ezekiel (28: 13) stresses the abundance of precious stones in Phoenicia. These stones, according to the Bible, were from Arabia (Ez. 27: 22; 1 Kg. 10: 2). It may be mentioned that foreign merchants had their own factories at the residence of Samaria (1 Kg. 20: 34). On the other hand, it is safe to assume that the art of cutting the stones had soon become a local craft, and it is wrong to suggest that all or most examples of glyptic art found in Palestine were imports from Phoenicia.

Such a theory is contradicted not only by the fact that the number of seals found in Palestine is by far greater than that found in Phoenicia, but also by the exquisite workmanship of the later Hebrew seals which were surely produced locally and thus point to an old tradition.

One of the stone-cutter's tools was the 'pen of iron with the point of a diamond' (Jer. 17: 1) which was probably used as a drill. But the wheel which cuts into the stone with its cutting edge had also been well known in the Orient from the 16th century B.C., and many of the seals have, in fact, been cut by means of such a wheel; they can be distinguished by the rounded ends of the lines, whereas such lines are pointed where drills have been used.

LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT OF THE SEALS.

The languages of Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Arabs and Hebrews, etc., all belong to the same family and are summed up under the name of 'Semitic languages'. Whereas Babylonian and Assyrian were written in cuneiform characters, such languages as Phoenician, Hebrew and Aramaic were written in alphabetical writing. Traces of the Semitic language spoken in Palestine and Syria have been found in the cuneiform tablets of the 15th century discovered at Tell el Amarna; but the richest source for our knowledge of a pre-Hebrew Canaanite dialect are the tablets, written in alphabetical cuneiforms, found at Ugarit on the North Syrian coast. The most important of all Canaanite dialects is, of course, represented by the unique document of the Hebrew Bible. Most similar to Hebrew was the Moabitic language, which we know from the 'Mesa' inscription (9th century) and from a few seals. Another Canaanite dialect was Phoenician, which is known from the Ugarit documents and from a number of inscriptions, the oldest dating from the 10th century B.C. The Phoenician language was later spread by colonists all over the Mediterranean, and 'Punic', as it was later called, was still spoken in North Africa in the 5th century A.D. Another Semitic language, Aramaic, was spread by infiltrating Aramaean tribes in Northern Syria and Mesopotamia from very early times. Aramaic was spoken generally in Mesopotamia and in Persian times it became the official language of the Empire. In Palestine, too, Aramaic gained more and more popularity from about the 5th century onwards, probably under the influence of the returning exiles. By the time of Christ, Aramaic had completely replaced Hebrew as the spoken language in Palestine.

The writing used on our seals is the old Hebrew

(Canaanite) script, which was also used by Phoenicians, Moabites, Aramaeans, etc. This alphabetic script is probably derived from the Sinaitic writing, specimens of which have been found in the Sinai peninsula (15th century B.C.). The oldest documents written in Phoenician-Hebrew characters date from the 10th century (Ahiram sarcophagus from Byblus). The oldest Hebrew document hitherto found dates from the 10th century (Gezer calendar). A few centuries later, this script must already have become very popular in Israel, as is shown by the tax-receipts of the 8th century found at Samaria, and by letters of the 7th to 6th century found at Lachish (all written on potsherds). The fact that relatively so many seals with 'Canaanite' inscriptions (half of about 230) have been found in Palestine also suggests the wide diffusion of the art of writing in Israel during this period.

There are quite a number of differences in the form of letters employed by the various 'Canaanite' peoples, but it is mostly the text itself by which we can definitely decide in what language an inscription was written or to what people an object such as a seal belonged. This is especially true of the early periods. Later 'Canaanite' writing underwent various developments. One of these is represented by the Aramaic script, which, together with the language, was introduced into Palestine in the 5th century B.C. From this script are derived not only Arabic but also the Hebrew square characters, the modern so-called Assyrian script. Only state documents such as the coins minted under Bar Cochba (2nd century A.D.) were still written in the old script. On the other hand, the Samaritans, who dissociated themselves from the rest of Israel after the return from exile, did not adopt the Aramaic letters, and are still using the old script to this very day.

Not only all the Semitic scripts (Hebrew, Arabic,

etc.) are derived from the ancient Phoenician-Hebrew alphabet, but also the Greek script (cf. Table of Alphabets, p. 59) and with it our Latin writing. According to an old Greek tradition, Kadmos introduced the alphabet from Phoenicia into Greece about the 11th century B.C. In the same way as all Semitic writing, Greek was at first written from right to left. Semitic consonants, for which there was no use in Greek, were taken as vowels (e.g. the *aleph* and *ayyin*), for which there were no signs in the Semitic alphabet. Herodotus still writes (5th century) of vessels with inscriptions in 'Phoenician' or 'Cadmaean' script which he had seen at Thebes. The similarity between the Greek and Hebrew alphabets can not only be seen in the table of alphabets (p. 59) but also by comparing the Hebrew seal with the Greek seal shown in fig. 44.

THE INSCRIPTIONS ON HEBREW SEALS

All inscribed Hebrew seals give the name of the owner and in most cases also the name of his father; in the latter case the designation 'son' (ben) is often omitted. Many of the seals belonged to women, who are described in the inscription as the wife or daughter of somebody (fig. 8, 24, 40). This shows that women too were 'juridical persons', and throws an interesting sidelight on the civilization of ancient Israel. Few such women's seals have been found in neighbouring countries. The most noteworthy exceptions are two seals, perhaps Ammonitic, owned by a 'slave woman' (fig. 27, 36). The word 'slave' is here perhaps used in the same special sense as on certain seals to be described presently.

On a number of seals the owner is described as 'servant of the king' (fig. 1, 18, 35), the Hebrew word being 'ebed', literally 'slave'. Such persons were ministers to the king or very high officials (cf. Kg. 22: 12). Another designation met with is 'boy'

(*ndar*) or 'son of the king' (fig. 26), which both refer probably to minor officials; even King Ahaz, when writing to the Assyrian overlord, styled himself 'slave and son' (2 Kg. 16: 17). In one case the well-known Biblical term (1 Kg. 4: 6, etc.) 'who is over the household' is used. The title 'scribe' (*sofer*) which is found on a few seals (fig. 28) designates a state official, probably the 'secretary of state', and occurs likewise in the Bible 2 Sam. 8: 17, 20: 25; and 1 Kg. 4: 3).

The names on the seals do not only increase our knowledge of Hebrew nomenclature generally, but they also give us a deep insight into the religious beliefs of the periods to which they belong. Not taking into account the oldest Hebrew names, most of the names are 'sentence names' making a declaration—which are a common feature with all Semitic peoples. Quite often these names give expression to parents' sentiments at the birth of their child, and they mostly show a pious devotion to God. The deity is called 'El' or by the specifically Israelite designation 'Jahweh', the latter always being abbreviated—*jahu*, *jah* or *ju*. Examples of seals with the name 'El' in this monograph are Elsmachi ('God is my support', fig. 3), Elnatan ('God has given', fig. 15), Nadabel ('God is gracious', fig. 22), and Pedael ('God has redeemed', fig. 29), which is probably a Phoenician seal. The name 'Jahweh' occurs in such names as Jotham ('J. is perfect'), Shephatjahu ('J. has judged', fig. 14), ~~Jaazaijahu~~ ('J. hears me', fig. 18), Hoshajahu ('J. is my salvation', fig. 20), Rabijahu ('My lord is Jahu', fig. 21), Hoglanijah ('J. has redeemed me', fig. 21), Gadjahu ('My fortune is J.', fig. 23), Abiju ('My father is J.', fig. 4), etc. Very often the theophoric name 'God' is replaced by 'Father' as in Shemuab ('The Father hears', fig. 2), or by 'brother' as in Ahimelech ('My brother is king', fig. 12, 16), or Ahiman ('My

brother has given a gift', fig. 10). The designation 'Adon' (Lord) for 'god' occurs on Hebrew, Phoenician (fig. 30) and Ammonite seals (fig. 35).

Of course, there also occur simple names which cannot always be explained, and even purely Egyptian ones (fig. 9, 24, 31). A name composed with 'El' may be Hebrew (fig. 22), Phoenician (fig. 29), Moabite (fig. 28) or Aramaic (fig. 39), as all Semitic peoples used this term for the deity. All names composed with 'Jahu' (or its abbreviations) are naturally Hebrew, whereas names composed with 'Chemosh' (fig. 28) point to the chief Moabite deity and to a Moabitic owner. The name of the Phoenician god 'Moth' occurs on an Ammonite (?) seal (fig. 36).

It is interesting to follow the designations for 'God' in Hebrew names. From literary evidence, names with 'El' appear to be very frequent before the royal period, i.e. before seals were used; they are less frequent in the Early Kingdom, but become more common again in the 7th century and very common in the post-exilic period. On the Lachish ostraca (c. 600 B.C.), however, no names with 'El' were found, and on the typical late Judaean seals, too, divine names composed with 'jahu' are much more frequent than those composed with 'El'. This fact may possibly be attributed to the religious reformation in the time of Josiah (622 B.C.). The original writing for 'Jaweh' was 'Jahu', abbreviated to 'Jah' under Aramaic influence. In Northern Israel, owing to different pronunciation, the name was written 'Ju' (fig. 4), as we know from the Samaria Ostraca of the 8th century.

The general names that occur on the seals of these different nations reveal their common cultural background. These nations were not only related racially but they also lived in the same cultural environment. Language and script, as we have seen, were practically

identical. Notwithstanding the fundamental difference in their religious outlook, even their religious thought and expression shows a marked similarity in various instances. It is therefore not surprising that a number of seals cannot be attributed to any definite people (e.g. fig. 38) with certainty. Only when the name of a specific deity occurs (Jahweh, Chemosh, Moth, etc.) are we on surer ground. Nor can this problem of attribution be solved by the pictorial representations, as the same motifs were used by all the peoples concerned. The provenance of a seal is a very unsafe indication, unless it has been found in the course of a scientific excavation.

Seals bearing an inscription only and no pictorial representation, may practically all be classified as Hebrew and belong to the later Hebrew (Judaean) period (7th to 6th century B.C.). Such seals are an exception not only in the neighbouring countries, but even in Israel. Seals with writing only are typically Judaean and are perhaps symptoms of the growing consciousness of the Mosaic prescriptions that may be connected with the above-mentioned reformation and the rigorous enforcement of the law after the return from exile (fig. 20-26).

THE ORIGIN OF HEBREW-PHOENICIAN ART

Palestine and Phoenicia have always been transit countries for trade caravans and the armies of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Both countries have at times stood under the sovereignty of these great powers. Small wonder, therefore, that Hebrew-Phoenician art is under a strong influence not only from the South but also from the North. A classic example of this is furnished by metal bowls and especially by ivory carvings which show the same motifs as those on the seals. Ivory carvings found at Megiddo, and dating from the 13th

to 12th century, show Egyptian designs which are strongly influenced by Semitic conceptions. Influences of the Hittite North and of Mycenaean art are also discernible on works of this period, as e.g. at Ras Shamra (Ugarit). Assyrian conquests in the 9th and 8th centuries gave a new impetus to local art. Under Assyrian vassalage trade barriers were widely opened, and we find ivory carvings of this time not only in Phoenicia, but also in Northern Syria (Arslan Tash), at Assyrian Nimrud, and at Samaria (Israel); Phoenician works were even introduced into Greece, where they had a deep influence on Greek art. These ivories of the 9th and 8th century represent mainly Egyptian motifs. This art is wholly archaic, for the models have lost their significance and their religious symbolism has become meaningless. The motifs belong to a tradition of the triumphal relief paintings of the old Pharaohs and especially of the gold ornaments (pectorals) of the 15th century. They also clearly express Semitic influences (fig. 46-48).

Our seals belong to the same cultural environment, the earliest examples dating from the 8th century. Some of the motifs are derived from Northern Syrian or Mesopotamian works of art. For example, the lion (fig. 49) of the processional road at Babylon shows the same conception as the ivory lion from Samaria (fig. 48), or the lion on a seal of a minister of Jeroboam (fig. 1). The winged monster on fig. 35 clearly betrays Assyrian influence. The obvious preference for depicting winged figures can be attributed to Northern influences. We meet with griffins and sphinxes, already known in ancient Egypt, but under Semitic influence these sphinxes have a female character. As on the ivories, Egyptian motifs are prevalent on the seals. The griffins and sphinxes mostly bear the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt (fig. 7, 10-12 and 46). Other repre-

sentations are the uraeus serpent (fig. 4, 5, 9, 14), Horus (fig. 30, 47), the Egyptian sign of life (fig. 4, 10, 11), or winged scarabs (fig. 6, 15-17, 30). But here again these motifs are void of Egyptian religious symbolism and their new meaning is not always clear. Most interesting in this respect are the griffins and sphinxes, the 'cherubim' of the Bible (fig. 9-13, 29, 32, 45, 46, 48), who as we shall see later (p. 20 f.) had a special significance in Semitic religion. Their introduction into Greek art is illustrated by the seal (fig. 43).

With the growing consciousness of the religious law (cf. p. 16), pictorial representations become rare in Judaea from about 600 B.C., and the seals begin to show nothing but the owner's name (fig. 20-27). These seals again apparently had some influence on Greek engraving, as is illustrated by the Greek seal (fig. 44) which at first sight is scarcely distinguishable from a Hebrew one. Whereas Phoenician craftsmanship had a far-reaching influence on the glyptic art of the Eastern Mediterranean—evident in seals of the archaic period found on Cyprus, Rhodes, Sardinia, Melos, etc.—we find also the reverse, Greek influence on Phoenician manufacture in the 5th century (fig. 34). At the same time seals inscribed in Hebrew (or Phoenician) disappear completely from Near Eastern civilization and are replaced by purely ornamental gems. These again become Hellenistic in style after the conquest of Alexander the Great in the 4th century.

THE STYLE OF HEBREW SEALS

We have seen the mixed influences to which Hebrew-Phoenician art was exposed, and have demonstrated these influences in the seals with which we are dealing. This 'mixed style', the product of different cultures, gives a special charm to our small objects of art. The representations show a feeling for the static and ornamental

and free composition is avoided (Galling). The picture is in an oval frame and placed on a firm basis. The inscription is often put into the exergue underneath this basis. Figures are mostly shown in profile. The representation has a certain lightness without minute precision (Diringer). Differences in style of seals are manifold, but may often only reflect their owner's material standards. The Hebrew script-seals proper are also framed by a double or simple oval, and if the father's name is given, the latter is divided from the owner's name by a diagonal line (fig. 20-26). Often in this case the first letter of the word 'B(e)n' is found on the upper and the second letter at the beginning of the lower line (fig. 22). The writing on these seals is of the utmost precision and very clear—in fact, the letters may be called 'classical'. The engraving of letters on Hebrew seals is generally done with much greater precision than that on seals of neighbouring peoples. The writing often shows ligatures (fig. 20), and the perfection of the engraving can be explained only by a long tradition.

We should not be surprised to find human and animal representations on Israelite and Jewish seals. Such motifs were the property of all oriental peoples and belong to the common background of their civilization. The pictorial representations in the Solomonic temple show that their use in art did not give offence at least in the period before the reform of King Josiah. "And in the oracle he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high." . . . "And the wings of the cherubim were stretched out so that the wing of the one touched the one wall and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall" (1 Kg. 6: 23 *seq.*). It is these 'cherubim' and the 'seraphim' (Jes. 6: 2), winged, mixed creatures that we find on so many of our seals.

There seems to have been a predilection for engraving

such creatures as winged sphinxes with human heads (cherubim), or a falcon's head (griffins), but there are also winged scarabs, winged serpents and, on an Aramaean seal, even winged human beings. The winged sun-disk is also frequently found. This preference for winged objects suggests that these strange animals should be interpreted as mediators between heaven and earth, between God and men. They were at the same time protectors of holy places (Gen. 3: 24) and the wings had a protective influence on men, as is often stated in the psalms: "He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou thrust" (Ps. 91: 4). This concept of protection is perhaps best illustrated by a tablet found in Northern Syria on which the cherub, according to the text, is guarding the house against the evil demons of the night (fig. 45). There was at the same time an idea that the deity was riding on such cherubs through the air, as can be seen in Biblical passages such as "And He rode upon a cherub and did fly" (1 Sam. 22: 11; cf. also Ps. 18: 11 and Ez. 10: 20). From passages as "He who sitteth on the cherubim" (1 Sam. 4: 4, etc.) we learn that the cherubim were the support of God, and such was surely their function on the ark in the temple (1 Kg. 6: 1). They served as seat for the invisible deity.

The word *cherub* itself is derived from Akkadian *karibu*, 'interceding deities', which shows that we are dealing with very primeval oriental ideas. Representations of cherubs have been found in Mesopotamia, Northern Syria and Egypt, but ultimately the conception may possibly be derived from the non-Semitic mountain-peoples such as the Kassites or the Mitanni. We should perhaps not try to read too much into these representations, which, at least in later times, did not belong to the 'official religion', but to the betwixt world of popular superstition. There exists, e.g. a Hebrew

seal (fig. 13), on which a griffin is speared by a man in Egyptian costume. This is another old oriental motif, from which St. George slaying the dragon may have been derived.

On our seals these winged monsters, as well as the winged sun-disk, surely had an apotropaic character, whether the seal be Hebrew, Phoenician or Aramaean.

A winged lion with human head (cherub) is represented on a probably Phoenician seal (fig. 29), and is very similar to a cherub on the ivories of Ahab's palace in Samaria (fig. 46). Both these cherubim wear the kilt of Egyptian origin between their forelegs, but the head has not the outspoken masculine appearance of the Egyptian sphinxes. A cherub seen *en face* with the Egyptian crown figures on a Hebrew seal (fig. 12) and is similar in its conception to a panel from Northern Syria of the 9th century (fig. 48).

Most of the griffins (winged lions with falcon's head) appear in Egyptian guise. (The word *griffin* is derived from Greek *grypos*, which means 'hook-nosed', but *grypos* may again be related to the Semitic root *krb.*) On the Megiddo seal (fig. 10), the griffin is seen advancing majestically and wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. The same crown is worn by the squatting griffin, ready for fight, on the Tell-Fara seal (fig. 11). On a seal from Samaria, the squatting griffin is crowned by a sun-disk (fig. 9), and on a Phoenician seal we see him crouching above a winged solar disk (fig. 32).

These winged monsters, cherubs and griffins, have found their way into Greek art, as may be seen from the seal found at Melos (fig. 43). We may surmise that the pegasos-conception is likewise derived from oriental prototypes. It may also be pointed out that our usual conception of cherubs as winged boy-angels is due to the fact that in the early years of Christianity, Jews and

Christians had no longer a notion of what the biblical cherubim had been like. A four-winged human figure, nevertheless, appears on an Aramaic seal (fig. 37), and such representations may have influenced the picture of the 'El of Byblus', the Kronos of the Greeks, as it still appears on a Byblian coin of the 2nd century B.C. (fig. 52).

On other seals appears a serpent with (fig. 4, 5, 14) or without wings (fig. 2, 9), and the uraeus snake (a kind of cobra, the basilisk of the Greeks), which had been the symbol of divine and royal sovereignty in Egypt. These monsters, too, are known from the Bible (Jer. 6: 2), where the 'seraphim' are described as having six wings and praising the name of God. (The Hebrew word *saraph* means serpent.) Winged scarabs are also often represented (fig. 6, 15-17, 30), and these again were originally an Egyptian motif, the scarab being the symbol of the god Khepera, who causes the sun to move across the sky as the beetle causes the ball to roll (fig 6). But whereas in Egypt only two-winged scarabs are found, they have often four wings in Israel or Phoenicia, where the original symbolic meaning had lost its significance.

The winged solar-disk, too, was originally the symbol of the Egyptian god Horus, but had spread early all over the Orient. We find the winged solar disk not only on Hebrew seals, but also on Phoenician (fig. 32) and especially Aramaic ones (fig. 39-41). On a Phoenician (?) seal the sun is superimposed by a warrior with bow and arrow, possibly representing the usually imageless god Asshur (fig. 19). Other Egyptian motifs appearing on our seals are the *ankh*, the sign of life (fig. 4, 10, 11), and the lotus flower, the symbol of resurrection and immortality (fig. 5, 30). On some seals the 'child Horus' (fig. 30 and cf. fig. 47) is seen rising from an open lotus-flower, and on the same seal we even see

a cat, also perhaps a symbol of the Sun-God, rising from a lotus-flower.

Mesopotamian in origin are the crescent of Sin (the Moon-God) or the star of Ishtar (fig. 31, 35, 38, 42), and these symbols occur especially on Aramaic seals.

Scenes of adoration and sacrifice are often represented (fig. 3, 7, 41), even on Hebrew seals. An incense burner is shown on an Aramaic seal (fig. 42). Human figures such as a man advancing with his staff or sceptre in hand probably portray the distinguished seal-owner himself (fig. 2, 7, 31). Pictures of animals are rather frequent, and it is not necessary to postulate a symbolic significance each time a lion (fig. 1, 6) or bull is engraved. One seal (fig. 33) shows a galloping horse, another (fig. 8) apes, and the seal (fig. 38) probably depicts a mule. Besides, as already mentioned, we meet with serpents (fig. 2, 4, 5, 9, 14), locusts (fig. 10) and various birds (fig. 2, 12, 17). Of special interest is the fighting cock on a Hebrew seal (fig. 18), which shows that, contrary to opinions formerly held, this animal was introduced into Palestine long before the times of the Medes and Persians.

The figures on these small monuments are significant not only because they illustrate Hebrew religious thought, but also because they had a profound influence on Greek and Roman art and hence on European civilization. As has already been pointed out, Hebrew seals of the later Judaean kingdom display only very seldom the wealth of motifs found on earlier seals. Religious awakening left no place for pictorial representations, and writing only was employed. But here again these insignificant gems are able to show us the deep piety of their times. They tell us a tale of generations long passed by.

ILLUSTRATIONS



I. ROARING LION

This magnificent work of art (now lost) points to Mesopotamian influence (cf. Fig. 49). The ivory lion from Samaria (Fig. 48/2) and Fig. 6 may also be compared. Inscribed: *Belonging to Shema, the servant of Jeroboam*. The owner was a minister of King Jeroboam (783-743 B.C.) Jasper. Hebrew, 8th century B.C. From Megiddo.



2. MAN WALKING TO THE LEFT

The head shows Egyptian influence, the costume points to Mesopotamian prototypes. In his right hand the man holds a stick, the left hand resting on the point of it. To the right a stand supporting a rooster. Behind the man a serpent with its head to the left and its tail coiling round the stand and apparently also round the stick to the left. Inscribed: *Shemab*.

White opal scaraboid. Bought in Egypt, but said to originate from Syria. Hebrew, about 8th century B.C.

3. SACRIFICER RAISING HIS HAND IN ADORATION

The animal is apparently a small cattle. Inscribed: *Belonging to Elsmachi*.

White opal scaraboid. From Transjordan. Hebrew, about 8th century B.C.



4. EGYPTIAN SYMBOL OF LIFE AND WINGED URAEUS

Inscribed: *Belonging to Abiju*.

Amethyst scaraboid. From Galilee. Hebrew, 9th or 8th century B.C.



5. FOUR-WINGED URAEUS
WEARING THE WHITE CROWN OF UPPER EGYPT
(Egyptian serpent goddess Buto?)

Below, papyrus on stalk; in upper segment a series of parallel oblique lines joined by short horizontal strokes.
Inscribed: *Belonging to Shaphat.*

Amazonite scaraboid. From Palestine. Hebrew, 8th century B.C. This seal has been found in its original gold ring (Fig. 51, 1).



6. ROARING LION TO RIGHT

Below in lower section, winged scarab with its ball, the symbol of the god Khepera, who causes the sun to roll through the heavens. Inscribed: *Belonging to Asaniel.*

Jasper scarab of unknown provenance. Hebrew (or Phoenician), 8th or 7th century B.C. (Cf. Fig. 1.)



7. EGYPTIANIZED CROWNED FIGURE WITH SCEPTRE,
STANDING WITH ITS BACK TO AN INSCRIBED OBELISK
(not decipherable)

The right hand is raised in adoration. Inscribed:
Belonging to Shema.

Jasper scarab of unknown provenance. Hebrew, 8th or
7th century B.C.



8. TWO ANIMALS (APES?) RIGHT AND LEFT OF A FLOWER
Egyptian influence is manifest. Inscribed: *Belonging to
Elsegub, daughter of Elishama.*

Red Jasper of unknown provenance. Hebrew, 8th or
7th century B.C.



9. WINGED GRIFFIN WITH FALCON'S HEAD AND LION'S BODY

The head is crowned by a sun-disk. In front of the griffin an uraeus. Inscribed: *Belonging to Petis*. The name is Egyptian and means "the one given by Isis." Highly polished banded agate of light milky and grey colours passing at each end into translucent quartz. Scaraboid. From Samaria. Hebrew, 8th century B.C.



10. WINGED GRIFFIN WITH DOUBLE CROWN OF UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT AND KILT BETWEEN LEGS

To the right, Egyptian symbol of life; in the lower segment a locust. Inscribed: *Haman (or Ahiman?)* Serpentine scaraboid. From Megiddo. Hebrew, 8th century B.C. (Cf. Fig. 46.)



II. WINGED GRIFFIN WITH FALCON'S HEAD AND CROWN
OF UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT TO LEFT,
BEFORE EGYPTIAN SYMBOL OF LIFE

Inscribed: *Belonging to H̄ojim (or Ahijam).*
Scaraboid. From Tell-Fara. Hebrew, about 8th century B.C.



I2. WINGED DEITY WITH EGYPTIAN CROWN
AND SCORPION-LIKE TAIL

To the left a bird sitting on a twig. To the right a "fleur-de-lys". Inscribed: *Belonging to (A)himelech.*

White stained cornelian scaraboid. From Palestine.
Hebrew, 8th or 7th century B.C. (Cf. Fig. 48.)



13. MAN CLAD IN A SHORT KILT AND EGYPTIAN HEADDRESS
SPEARING A WINGED GRIFFIN

This is an old motif in oriental mythology and from it St. George slaying the dragon may have been derived. It should be noted that on the seal impression the man is holding his spear in the left hand, an error committed by the engraver. Inscribed: *Belonging to Jekamjahu.*

Scaraboid brown limestone (probably local). From Palestine. Hebrew, 8th century B.C.



14. WINGED URAEUS SERPENT AND ANKH SIGN

Below inscription in two lines: *Belonging to Shephatjahu* (the son of) *Asajahu.*

Banded quartz scaraboid. From Lachish. Hebrew, 8th or 7th century B.C.



15. WINGED SCARAB

Inscribed: *For Elnatan.*

Red, yellow and white stained agate conoid. From Syria.
Hebrew, about 8th century B.C.



16. WINGED SCARAB AND TWO EGYPTIAN SYMBOLS OF LIFE
Inscribed: *Belonging to Ahimelech (the son of?) Samach.*
Steatite scarab. From Lachish. Hebrew, 7th or 6th century B.C.



17. TWO KNOTS (HIEROGLYPHS) BETWEEN FALCONS
ABOVE WINGED SOLAR DISK

In lower segment a winged Scarab. Inscribed: *Ebedchijun (?)*.

Provenance unknown. Hebrew, about 7th century B.C.



18. FIGHTING COCK

The earliest representation of this animal on a Palestinian monument—it is noteworthy that cocks are not mentioned in the Bible. Inscribed: *Belonging to Jaazanjahu, servant of the King*. The owner may have been the Jaazaniah mentioned in 2 Kg. 25 : 3, who was the commanding officer of Mizpa.

Black and white banded onyx scaraboid. From Tell en Nasbeh (Mizpa). Hebrew, about 600 B.C.



19. WINGED SOLAR DISK CONTAINING A WARRIOR WITH
BOW AND ARROW (THE GOD ASSHUR?)

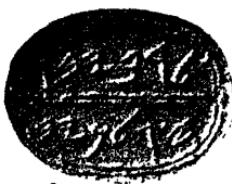
Inscribed: *Belonging to Jahaz.*

Conoid agate. From Beirut. Hebrew or Phoenician,
about 7th century B.C.



20. Inscribed: *Belonging to Hoshajahu, the son of Shalemjahu.*
White opal scaraboid. From Jerusalem. Hebrew, about
6th century B.C.

21



22



21. Inscribed: *To Rabijahu (the son of) Higlanijah*. The name Higlanijah ("God exiled me") furnishes a clue to the date of the seal. Presuming that the name refers to the Babylonian exile, we may take it that Higlanijah was born there in the second quarter and his son Rabijahu in the third quarter of the 6th century. The seal was therefore probably cut towards the end of the 6th century. Not only does the seal attribute the exile to an act of God (Higlanijah), but also expresses confidence in God (Rabijahu—"My Lord is God"). The names on the seal are a typical token of Jewish piety during that period.
 Green nephrite (jade) scaraboid, 13 mm. long. From Jerusalem. Hebrew, 6th century B.C.

22. Inscribed: *Belonging to Bakesh, the son of Nadabel*.
 Red and black stained hard limestone scaraboid. From Judaea (Hebron). Hebrew, about 6th century B.C.

23



24



23. Inscribed: *Belonging to Gadjahu, the son of Bezail*.
 Red carnelian scaraboid. From Judaea. Hebrew, about 6th century B.C.

24. Inscribed: *Belonging to Adatha, the wife of Pashur*.
 Red carnelian scaraboid. From Judaea. Hebrew, about 6th century B.C.



25. CLAY SEAL IMPRESSION FROM A PAPYRUS ROLL.

Inscribed: *Belonging to Hilkijahu, the son of Mas.*
From Lachish. Hebrew, about 7th century B.C.

26. CLAY SEAL IMPRESSION FROM A PAPYRUS ROLL.

Inscribed: *Belonging to Gealjahy, son of the King.*
From Beth Zur. Hebrew, about 7th century B.C.



27. Inscribed: *Belonging to Alijah, the girl-servant of Hananel.*

Highly polished transparent chalcedony of light bluish colour. Scaraboid. From Amman. Hebrew, Ammonite or Edomite, about 7th or 6th century B.C.



28. Inscribed: *For Chemosham (the son of) Chemoshel, the scribe.* Both names are typically Moabitic. 'Scribe' (*sofer*) was probably the term for a high Government official, possibly the Secretary of State. (Cf. p. 15.) Geyserite scaraboid. Said to have been found near Aley in the Lebanon. Moabite, 9th or 8th century B.C.

29



29. HUMAN-HEADED CHERUB

Similar representations occur on the Samaria ivories (Fig. 46 and p. 20). Inscribed: *Pedael.*

White quartzite scaraboid. From Syria. Phoenician, 8th century B.C.

30



30. WINGED SCARAB RISING FROM LOTUS FLOWER

Above, Horus (the rising sun) on a sun-disk. To the right, cat (symbol of sun-god) rising from lotus-flower. Inscribed: *Belonging to Adonisha.*

From Syria. Phoenician, about 8th century B.C.



31. BEARDED HUMAN FIGURE WITH LONG HAIR WALKING TO RIGHT AND HOLDING A STICK (SCEPTRE) IN HIS HAND

He is apparently dressed in an apron only. In the upper right corner a lunar crescent and solar disk. Inscribed: *Belonging to Pera*. The name is Egyptian and means "He who belongs to Ra". White opal scaraboid. From Beirut. Phoenician (?), about 8th century B.C.



32



33

32. WINGED CROUCHING GRIFFIN WITH EGYPTIAN CROWN AND WINGED SOLAR DISK

Inscribed: *Belonging to Rapha*.

• Red jasper scaraboid. From Beirut. Phoenician, about 7th century B.C.

33. HORSE GALLOPING TO LEFT

Inscribed: *Belonging to Tamacha, the son of Miknemelech*. It is noteworthy that there exist two seals with very similar animal-representations and similar workmanship. One of them has been found at Baghdad and because of its Hebrew name is attributed to an exiled Jew. The other, also of Syrian provenance, has a Phoenician name.

Scaraboid. From Aleppo. Phoenician, about 7th century B.C.



34. SATYR WITH KANTHAROS

Inscribed: *Abdo.*

Rock crystal scaraboid. Phoenician, about 5th century B.C.



35. WINGED DEMON WITH CURLED TAIL, HOLDING A DAGGER IN HIS LEFT HAND

To left above, a crescent, and to the right a sun-disk. The representation shows strong Assyrian influence. Inscribed: *Belonging to Adonipelet, the servant of Amminadab.* An Ammonite king bearing this name is mentioned in the annals of Assurbanipal, and this seal probably belonged to one of his ministers.

Red agate scaraboid. Possibly from Syria. Ammonite, 7th century B.C.

42



36. Inscribed: *Belonging to Anamuth, the girl-servant of Radilabaz.*

White and brown banded agate scaraboid, in its original silver mounting (Fig. 51/2). Found near Irbid. Am-mohite (?), about 6th century B.C.



37. FOUR-WINGED NAKED GODDESS WITH LONG SIDE-LOCKS,
CLUBBED AT THE END (ASTARTE?)

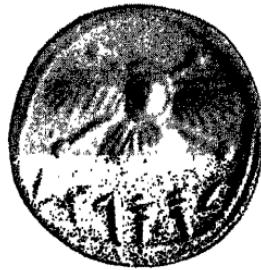
Right hand rests on triple-handed staff (sceptre).
Inscribed in exergue: *Belonging to Jichala.*

- Chalcedony scaraboid. Provenance unknown. Aramaic, about 8th or 7th century B.C.



38. MULE TO RIGHT

To the left above, star and lunar crescent; to right, ornament. In exergue. Inscribed (retrograde): *Cheni*. Aramaic (?), about 7th century B.C.



39. WINGED SUN

Inscribed below: *Belonging to Sasrael* (possibly "The prince of princes is El").

Provenance unknown. Aramaic, about 7th century B.C.

44

40



41



40. WINGED SUN

Inscribed: *Belonging to Abijehi, the daughter of Jenahem.*

Haematite conoid. Bought at Cairo. Aramaic, about 7th century B.C.

41. PRIEST WORSHIPPING BEFORE FIRE-ALTAR

Above, winged solar disk representing symbol of god Asshur. Inscribed: *Dodalah ("My friend (God) is exalted").*

• Sapphirine chalcedony cone. Provenance unknown. Aramaic, about 7th or 6th century B.C.



42. CRESCENT-CROWNED ALTAR WITH CRESCENT AND SIX-RAYED STAR

Inscribed: *Belonging to Hana.*

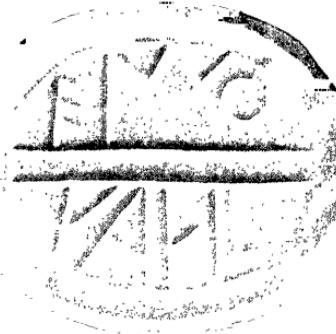
Agate scaraboid. From Baghdad. Aramaic, about 6th century B.C.



43. A CHERUB IN GREEK CONCEPTION

Above, a star.

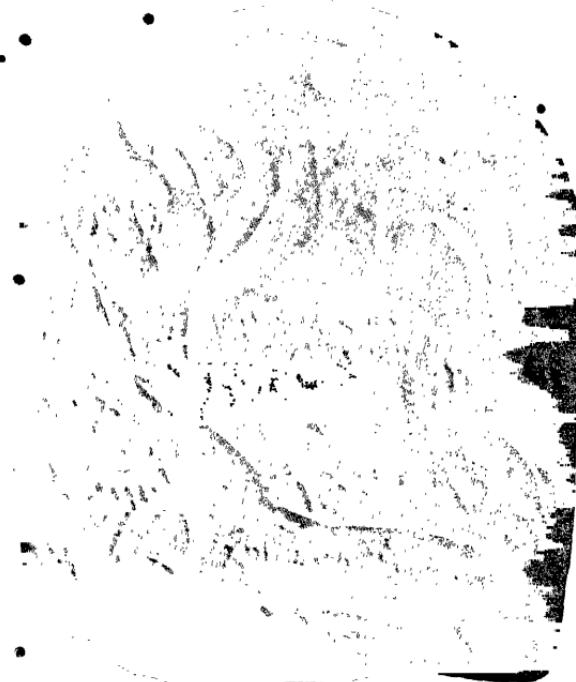
Lenticular grey stone. From Melos. Greek, early 7th century B.C.



44. Inscribed: *Of Charidemos.*

The writing is in the Euboean alphabet and shows the transition from Hebrew-Phoenician to Greek writing. The single bordering line and the two dividing lines are also found on Hebrew seals and point to the influence of the latter on Greek craftsmanship.

Chalcedony scaraboid. Bought at Athens. Greek, 6th century B.C.



45. A CHERUB

Incantation tablet found in North Syria. Here the cherub is represented as a protector against the destructive demons of the night. It seems that the cherub is identified with the god Hauron in the inscription. The wolf devouring the evil demons is his wife.

Gypsum tablet. From Arslan Tash. Hebrew, 7th century B.C.



46. CHERUB (HUMAN-HEADED WINGED LION)
STANDING IN LOTUS THICKET

Ivory plaque from the palace of King Ahab at Samaria (the "ivory house" of 1 Kg. 22:39). The cherub has a flattened double-crown, and a kilt between the forelegs. (Cf. Fig. 29.)

Hebrew, 9th century B.C.



47. THE INFANT HORUS WEARING THE 'ATEF' CROWN,
SITTING ON A LOTUS-FLOWER

Another ivory plaque from Ahab's palace. On either side of the lotus-flower is a leaf of the blue water-lily. (Cf. Fig. 7 for a similar crown.)

Hebrew, 9th century B.C.



48/1

A SITTING CHERUB, FULL-FACE,
WITH WINGS DEPLOYED

48 (1). Ivory plaque from the furniture
of Hazael, King of Damascus, carried off as
spoil by the King of Assyria. With this
plaque the seal on Fig. 12 may be compared.
From Arslan Tash. Aramaean, 9th
century B.C.



LION

48 (2). Ivory sculpture from Ahab's palace.
Compare the lion seals (Figs. 1, 6) and the Babylonian
lion (Fig. 49).

From Samaria. Hebrew, 9th century B.C.



49. LION
From the processional road in Babylon.
(Enamelled bricks.)
Compare the lion on Figs. 1, 6 and 48/2.
Babylonian, early 6th century B.C.

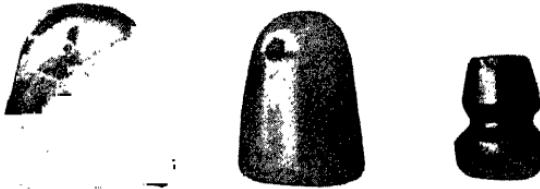
50. THE VARIOUS FORMS OF SEALS



(1) The upper and lower sides of a scarab (Fig. 16) and its impression.



(2) The upper and lower sides of a scaraboid and its impression (Fig. 18).



(3) Various forms of conoid seals; note the holes for suspension.



(1) The seal illustrated on Fig. 5; the end of the ring holding the casing has the form of a papyrus flower. The gold ring itself is square in section and we may therefore assume that it was worn on a cord.



(2) The seal (Fig. 36) in its silver mounting. It was mounted on swivels for turning the bezel of the (lost) ring.



52. A COIN FROM BYBLOS: KRONOS NUDE
WITH THREE PAIRS OF WINGS

He rests his right hand on sceptre and wears a (debased) Egyptian crown (cf. Fig. 47 and p. 23).

Phoenician, 2nd century B.C.

LIST OF SEALS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following abbreviations are used to denote the different collections:

[CMP] Cabinet de Médailles, Paris

[BM] British Museum

[PM] Palestine Archaeological Museum

[AR] Author's collection

Seals published in Dringer's *Iscrizioni* are only given according to this source, where the relevant earlier literature may be found. Where no size is indicated, the seals are reproduced in double their original size.

1. lshm' 'bd yrb'm. Diringer Pl. xxi, 5. Formerly in Istanbul; now lost.
2. shmab. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. October 1939). Enlarged 3 times.
3. l' lsmkhy. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. April 1938).
4. l' byw. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. April 1938).
5. lshft. Mr. Richman (Haifa). I. Ben-Dor (QDAP, xiii, Nos. 1-2).
6. l's n'l. [BM]. Diringer Pl. xxxii, 1.
7. l sh m'. [BM]. Diringer Pl. xix, 16.
8. l' l s g b bt 'lsh m'. [BM]. Diringer Pl. xx, 28.
9. lpts. [PM]. I. Ben-Dor (QDAP, Vol. xii, Nos. 3-4, 1946).
10. hmn. [PM]. Diringer, Pl. xix, 3 and E. L. Sukenik (Kedem, I, p. 46, 1942). Enlarged 4 times.
11. lyhm. [PM]. Diringer, Pl. xix, 8 and J. Kutsher (Kedem, I, p. 44, 1942).
12. lhmlkh. [PM]. E. L. Sukenik (Kedem, I, p. 46, 1942). Enlarged 4 times.
13. lykmyhw. [PM]. I. Ben-Dor (PEFQSt. Jan.-April 1948).
14. lshftyhw 'syhw. [PM]. J. L. Starkey (PEFQSt. October 1937, Pl. viii).
15. l' lntn. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. October 1939). Enlarged 3 times.
16. l' hmlkh smkh. [PM]. S. H. Hooke (PEFQSt. October 1935). Enlarged 3 times.
17. 'bdkyn. [CMP]. Diringer, Pl. xxi, 24.
18. ly' znyhw 'bd hmlkh. [PM]. Diringer, Pl. xxi, 6.
19. lyhz. In the trade. Diringer, Pl. xix, 10.
20. lhwsh'yhwbn shlmyhw. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. April 1938). Enlarged 4 times.

21. lrbyhw hglnyh. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. October 1942). Enlarged 5 times.

22. lbksh bn ndb 'l. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. October 1942).

23. lgdyhw bn bz—. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. April 1938).

24. l'dt'sht pshhr. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. April 1938).

25. lhkhyhw bn m's. [PM]. J. L. Starkey (PEFQSt. October 1936).

26. lg (d?) lyhw bn hmlkh. [PM]. Diringer, p. 127, 10.

27. l 'lyh 'mt hnn'l. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. October 1942) and N. Avigad (PEQSt. July-October 1946).

28. lkmsh 'm kmsh 'l hsfr. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (BJPES, Vol. xii, 1945-46). This seal is genuine notwithstanding W. F. Albright (BASOR, No. 105, p. 14, 1947).

29. lpd'l. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. October 1939). Enlarged 3 times.

30. l'dnsh'. [CMP]. Ch. Clermont-Ganneau (Rec. d'archéologie orientale, ii, p. 46).

31. lpr'. [AR]. A. Reifenberg (PEFQSt. October 1939). Cf. also I. Ben-Dor on seal 9.

32. lrf'. [AR]. Hitherto unpublished.

33. ltmkh mknmlkh. [CMP]. M. A. Levy (Siegel und Gemmen, Pl. ii, 3).

34. 'bd'. [CMP]. Ch. Clermont-Ganneau (Journ. Asiatique, 8 sér. t. ii, Pl. on p. 304, no. 28, 1883).

35. l' dpplt 'bd 'mndb. Dropsie College, Diringer, Pl. xxii, 11.

36. l 'nmwt 'mt rblbz. [AR]. Hitherto unpublished.

37. dykl'. [AR]. CIS, ii, 1, No. 106 (not ykl!).

38. kny. [CMP]. Inscr. retrograde. Unpublished?

39. lssr' l. [CMP]. M. A. Levy (Siegel und Gemmen, Pl. i, 3); CIS, ii, 1 No. 82.

40. l'byhy bt ynhm. [CMP]. Diringer, Pl. xxii, 16.

41. dd'lh. [AR]. CIS, ii, 1, No. 107.

42. lhn'. [AR]. Lady H. Carnegie (Cat. of the collection of antique gems formed by James, ninth earl of Southesk, 1908).

43. Metropolitan Museum, New York. 11/16 in. From G. M. A. Richter (Ancient Gems).

44. Metropolitan Museum, New York. 5/8 x 13/16 in. From G. M. A. Richter (Ancient Gems).

45. Gvt. Museum, Aleppo. Illustrated and described according to N. H. Torczyner: 'A Hebrew Incantation of the Biblical Period against the Demons of the Night' (BJPES, Vol. xii, pp. 47 sq. 1945-46).

46. [PM].
47. [PM].
48. Louvre, Paris. Illustrated after R. D. Barnett: 'Phoenician and Syrian Ivory Carving.'
49. Berlin Museum.
50. Nos. 1 and 2 are in the PM. No. 3. [AR].
51. No. 1. [PM]. No. 2. [AR].
52. [AR].

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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TABLE OF ALPHABETS

Old Hebrew	Greek	Latin	Modern Hebrew	Translit-eration
א	A	A	א	
ב	B	B	ב	b
ג	Γ	G	ג	g
ד	Δ	D	ד	d
ה	E	E	ה	h
ו	(F)	V	ו	w
ז			ז	z
ח	H	H	ח	h
ט	Θ		ט	t
י	I	I	י	y
כ	K	K	כ	<u>k</u> <u>kh</u>
ל	Λ	L	ל	l
מ	M	M	מ	m
נ	N	N	נ	n
ס	Ξ		ס	s
ו	O	O	ו	ו
פ	Π	P	פ	p
צ			צ	z
ק	(Q)	Q	ק	<u>k</u>
ר	P	R	ר	r
ש	Σ	S	ש	<u>sh</u>
ת	T	T	ת	t

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